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BALTIC
countries

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file 75711

Estonia 15,318

X Russia

X Germany

7 October 1944

Miss Grace Tully
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Dear Grace:

I believe the President will be interested
in the attached reports. Will you kindly see
that they reach his desk.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

William J. Donovan
Director

SECRET

Estonia 15, 28
~~SECRET~~

7 October 1944

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

I believe you will find of interest two reports which I am enclosing concerning developments in Estonia as a result of the Russian advance.

William J. Donovan
Director

AMS :mr

SECRET

September 12, 1944

STATEMENT BY DR. OSCAR LOOPITS

Docent in the University of Tartu, Director of the Estonian Folklore Archives, now political refugee in Sweden.
(The recorded events all took place in southeastern Estonia.)

The prefect of the Valk police, Osmo Tannenasi, told me on August 12, 1944, that on the Voru front the petrol shortage was such that 440 horses had to be sent to the front for the transport of ammunition. At the same time the local German fuhrers had enough petrol for their pleasure trips and the petrol reserves at the Keeni railway station remained untouched.

After the departure of the Germans from Laura a number of local people went with red flags to meet the Russian "liberators". Later, when the Estonian Self-Defence Corps recaptured Laura, it appeared that the Russians had before their retreat killed all those who had thus hoped to save their lives. As a rule, however, civilians are not killed on a large scale by the Red Army. This is done some days later by the NKVD units.

The chief of the Self-Defence Corps of Voruma, Tiivel, told me on August 16, 1944 that immediately after a Russian tank unit had entered Antsla, the local Communists formed an Executive Committee which shot 30 persons. The officers of the Estonian Self-Defence Corps at once organized resistance, giving orders to open fire not only on the attacking Russians but also on the fleeing Germans. The town of Antsla was encircled and retaken, all the Soviet tanks being captured. The members of the Executive Committee, among them a former German SD-official, were shot. The German set fire to the town while retreating but the local Estonians extinguished the fire. Similarly, the town of Voru was set on fire by the retreating German. Nearly the entire population had fled for fear of the Bolsheviks. The head of the province, Hansen, and Tiivel, proclaimed the Estonian Democratic Republican regime in the town after the Germans had left and the Voru Self-Defence Corps fought not as a German, but as an Estonian Republican military unit, displaying blue-black-white banners. This national regime lasted only ten hours, then the Russian tanks entered the town but were afterward repulsed. At the time this story was told, heavy fighting was going on in Voru with Russian infantry. The Russians were drunk and sang, whereas the Germans abandoned their equipment and fled into the forests, Rouge was recaptured after it having first been taken by the Russians.

The apothecary Kuusk told me on August 23, 1944, that when the Soviet troops came to his father's farm near Otepaa he had hid under the floor of the farm house. His father and other farmers were ordered to transport Russian wounded soldiers. Kuusk heard how the Russians gave instructions

to

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- 2 -

to shoot all the farmers after taking the wounded to their destination. Two days later Otepaa was recaptured but none of the farmers returned.

The wife of the mayor of Otepaa, Mrs. Tiitsmaa, described how the Germans had ordered the people to evacuate long before the arrival of the Russians. In the meantime the German troops looted the houses of the town exactly as Narva had been looted last winter. Even the Mayor's library had been ransacked.

The flier, Uuesson, said on August 20, 1944, that he had seen on a reconnaissance flight how long columns of women and children were being marched by Red soldiers from Vorumaa towards Pskov. Those who collapsed were left on the road. Most of the children had been separated from the women.

September 12, 1944

/Signed/
Oskar Loorits

SECRET

C O P Y

Sept. 10, 1944

15, 318
SECRETDEVELOPMENTS IN ESTONIA

The state of morale at this time is very disheartening. The German's evacuating to Germany has made the native people doubt Germany's intentions to defend the country (Estonia). A considerable part of the mobilized men, because of lack of ammunition and supplies, are inactive in the training areas, the Germans preventing them thus from engaging in a more decisive way in the defense of their native country. The Germans have not approved the forming of new independent Estonian fighting groups and the regiments of mobilized (Estonian) men are made subordinate to German divisions. The forming of Estonian fighting groups would surely raise the morale of the soldiers as well as the home front in their desire to fight for their own national freedom. The return of the Estonian Regiment that had been stationed in Finland was arranged in the most inconspicuous manner, and its treatment after that has aroused great bitterness and discouragement among those who are in the Regiment. The Regiment is not used as a whole, as the Estonians had hoped, but about 20 Estonians have been used to make up deficiencies of the SS-voluntary division, a part being at Kloogas and Kehra for training. The Germans do not consider as officers those who have received their officer's training in Finland, but have intended to send 113 of them to Germany for further training. As a result of this activity about twenty of the men from the regiment have escaped back to Finland.

Distrust and bitterness have brought about disorder in the evacuation activity in the southeastern and southern parts of the country. Evacuation orders (directions) are often given too late or not at all, and very little time is given for evacuation in which case the people have had to start out without the necessary articles of clothing, food, etc. Abundant grains and cattle have been left by the Germans or left to become a prey to the oncoming Russians. In addition it has happened that the German soldiers have robbed those in flight.

As a result of the rapid German retreat and deficient evacuation preparations a large part of the southeastern Estonian people were left in Russian invaded territory. In back of the front troops come the disciplinary commanding corps, in which are NKVD men, former militia men of the locality and communists, who do their "mopping up" job without delay, when those who had operated with the Germans are shot and the rest sent to march in "inside" Russia. Not only "the selected" but all without exception are to be taken to the Russian colonies. The terrorizing activities of the Russians have aroused a general fear in the land and thus strengthened

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- 2 -

the Estonian determination to fight against the communist control. In the other direction the apparent unwillingness of the Germans to furnish ammunition and supplies to the mobilized men as well as to give freedom of action to the Estonians has aroused great bitterness and feeling of hopelessness among the populace.

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15,312

Estonia

OFFICE OF STRATEGIC SERVICES SECRETARIAT

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INTEROFFICE MEMO

TO: E. J. Putzell, Jr., Lieut., USNR DATE: 10/4/44
FROM: Walter C. Langsam
SUBJECT: Reports on Estonia

Some time ago General Donovan requested all material we have available on political and morale conditions in Estonia. At the time, I sent him through you whatever we had on the subject. Since then two additional reports have come in and I am herewith forwarding copies thereof to you. Please let me know whether or not I should continue sending these as they come in.

AWG

Please prepare for FDR & Hull - W.C.L.

Enclosures-(2)

*Clear with Langsam to be
sure of evaluation & prior
dissemination*

SECRET

*original reports
returned to Langsam*

Top ↑

File Belts' Countries

22 September 1944

TO: Lt. E. J. Putzell

FROM: Walter C. Langsam

SUBJECT: SAR 6186.

This document is forwarded to you
to be transmitted to the General for his
information and retention.

Wch.

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Exposure 15 125. 4/25

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SAR-6186

15, 318

PUBLIC SENTIMENTS IN ESTONIAExtract from a private letter, dated August 1944

Estonia
x Russia
x Germany

.....The feelings of the Estonian people at present may be summarized in the ancient Roman exclamation: "morituri te salutant!" This is a conscious appreciation of the situation facing the Estonian people today. The Soviet armies have reached the Estonian frontier and threaten to re-occupy the country. The Estonian people are aware that the military occupation will be followed by arrests, executions, and deportations on a scale exceeding the horrors of 1941. The Soviet Union covets the Baltic States and Finland in order to establish her own "dominium maris Baltici." She claims to have incorporated the Baltic States in 1940, and nurses puppet governments for Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania on Russian soil. The Finns fear a similar fate if the Russians succeed in establishing their control over Finland. The reality of this danger is clearly illustrated by the ominous developments in Russo-Polish relations. Reports have reached Estonia from Soviet occupied Lithuania, Poland, and White Russia of large scale deportations of the intelligentsia and even of more prosperous farmers, who, according to the Soviet view, had been exposed too long to the influence of the bourgeois world. Broadcasts from Leningrad are constantly threatening the so-called Estonian Nazis with dire punishment when the Red Army reaches Estonia. An appeal was made to the partisans to prevent those "Nazi plutocrats" from leaving Estonia. They must be liquidated in order to prevent them from carrying on the fight against the Soviets from abroad. The Estonians have no doubt that the people branded by the Soviets as "Estonian Nazi Plutocrats" are primarily those patriotic Estonians who firmly stand and fight for the independence of their country, and of whom hundreds have been placed under arrest by the Germans for their pro-British sympathies. And since the aim of the overwhelming majority of the Estonian people is the restoration of Estonia's independence, mass reprisals on an unprecedented scale are expected. Such appeals from abroad would seem to serve the purpose of providing the Soviets with an alibi since any atrocities committed after the entry of the Red Army into Estonia could later on be blamed on the partisans. An impartial investigation of the facts under war conditions would obviously be very difficult. There is little hope for help from outside for the Estonians know that the Western Democracies are at present in no position to help, no help can be expected from Sweden, and the Finns have too many troubles of their own.

Despite all this, however, the Estonian people are united in the purpose of resisting by force of arms to the last possibility the reoccupation of their country by Soviet Russia. They are determined to carry on the fight even after the collapse of the German armies or their general withdrawal. An underground National Committee of the Republic of Estonia has been formed. The Committee is engaged on organizing a shadow administration and its own armed forces which is a most difficult task in view of the German occupation. The members of the Committee represent all political parties. They are men of the younger generation with truly democratic views who hitherto had organized

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- 2 -

SAR-6186

the anti-German resistance movement in Estonia. During the mass arrests in April and on May 1st a number of them were arrested but others are carrying on despite German efforts to capture them. These men are obviously no "Quislings," and yet the Soviets brand them as Nazis and their lackeys. While the Soviet forces are on the point of invading Estonian territory, the National Committee has issued an appeal to the people not to leave the country. As a result of this appeal the flow of refugees to Sweden and Finland has diminished. Some younger Estonians who had fled the country in order to avoid German mobilization are now eager to return from Sweden and to place themselves at the disposal of the National Committee for the defense of their country. The German attempts to mobilize the Estonians proved a failure because they endeavored to draft them into their own army and to make them fight for their own ends outside the territory of the Republic of Estonia. Now, however, they rally in response to an appeal by their own acknowledged representatives, The Estonian National Committee, whose aims are the restoration of National independence and the protection of Estonian lives and property. It may seem surprising that the Germans instead of supporting this popular movement are actually opposing the formation of an Estonian national army. It would appear that knowing the anti-German feelings of the Estonian people, the Germans fear that such an army under the political leadership of true patriots would not fight against the Russians alone, but would sooner or later turn against the Germans themselves. In their present difficulties, however, they have not been able to prevent the formation of Estonian national military units. At the same time they have sought to minimize the danger to themselves by resorting to political arrests. Hence the arrests of April and May 1st which affected primarily the Estonian intelligentsia. Public reaction to this step, however, was so ominous that a considerable number of those arrested had to be released again.

The main tragedy of the Estonian people is that they have to defend themselves against two enemies in opposite camps. Though, owing to the imminent danger which threatens the National existence and the very lives of the Estonians, the National Committee, supported in this by the whole population, is organizing at present the defense of the country against a new Soviet invasion, the Committee has to work underground and its members are in constant danger of being arrested by the Germans. If the resistance movement against the Germans is at present less active, it is due to the fact that a mass uprising would inevitably lay the country open to a Soviet Russian invasion. And the fear of Soviet Russia is even greater than the hatred for the Germans. Nevertheless, no one in Estonia doubts that in case the independence of the Republic of Estonia were guaranteed by the Allies such popular uprising against the Germans would take place, which would vitally affect their North-Eastern front. Such a guarantee, however, has not been given. The Atlantic Charter was received with enthusiasm by the Estonian people at the time of its proclamation. Recent pronouncements of responsible Allied statesmen, however, have cast doubts on its effectiveness and general application. And yet, there is a deep conviction among the Estonian people that if they manage to survive the present struggle the principles of the Atlantic Charter will prevail in the end.....

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T-2215
15 August 1944

The following excerpts concerning the attitude of the Latvian people toward the Russians and the Germans have been taken from a Danish report:

1. On 20 July the Germans were assumed to have 35-40 divisions in the Baltic States. They provide no resistance worth mentioning to the Russians. The Germans are not short of men, but there is a certain shortage of material in the Baltic Area. The essential reason is however that their combat morale is undermined. The German soldier is unable to arrange any defense, largely because of internal suspicion. No one wants to be left behind and become a sort of "Stalingrad Group". It is thought that a large part of the low morale is attributable to Latvian propaganda. In the days just after the German occupation, a small number of Latvians were taken into the German Army. They were put in among the German soldiers. During the first year many Latvians were forced into the army, and now the situation is in some cases reversed. There are German companies with about 10-15 Latvians to one German. Because of the hatred aroused by the Germans in Latvia, the Latvians do everything they can to sabotage the Germans. There is no doubt many of them are pure partisans. They steal weapons and sell them to the population.
2. As for feeling in Latvia, there is no doubt that 90% of the people in the country favor the Russians. This is attributed to the absence in Latvia of a farming class owning its land. The country population sees no difference between working for a private owner and working for a "kolhos" association. The Germans have returned no ground to the former owners, but rather continued the Russian system, increasing the quotas to be turned over to them. In some cases these quotas go up to 50%. In the cities, especially in Riga, feeling toward the Russians is much less favorable, chiefly because most of the "intelligentsia" is concentrated there. These people have no sympathy for the Germans either. They have begun an independence movement which, however, comes a bit late to have any great effect on the people. In July, probably the 13th, an order came forbidding people to leave Latvia or send property to Germany. This affects Germans both from Germany and Latvia. It was due to preparations being made by civil servants and returned Baltic Germans for abandoning the country in haste.

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T-2226
13 August '44

The following report came from an Estonian source which we consider reliable:

1. There are several signs pointing to continued German resistance in the Estonian sector. Thus, Inspector General Soodla - leader of the SS in Estonia - was in Berlin recently seeking more arms, and it is reported that the Germans promised to comply with his request. Of the German troops evacuated from Finland since the beginning of the offensive on the Baltic front, one-half were sent from Hangö to Estonia, while the others were sent to Danzig. Two divisions of Germans have been brought in as reinforcements since the beginning of the big offensive on the Estonian front. The Nazis also recalled all officials of the "Estonian German Civil Administration" from Königsburg and East Prussia. These officials have now been sent to Estonia to organize the defense of that country. Similarly, Henrich Lohse, Reichskommissar for northern "Ostland", has moved with his staff from Riga to Pärnu, in Estonia. Recently, Dr. Hjalmar Mäe, leading Estonian Quisling and head of the so-called "Estonian Self-administration", proclaimed total mobilization in Estonia. Men, including eighteen-year-old boys, have been armed and are being sent to the front. It is alleged (no confirmation) that after the mobilization was proclaimed, the "Estonian Self-government" was dissolved by the Germans. The "German Civil Administration", however, continues to function under Commissar General Karl Litzman.

4. Two Estonians recently escaped from the Soviet-captured city of Vilna. They report that the Russian troops assured the frightened populace that they would remain in Lithuania. Two days later, however, the NKVD (Political Police) forces arrived and the people were asked to fill in the following questionnaire:

- a) Why did you not evacuate to the Soviet Union in 1941?
- b) What have you done to sabotage the German war effort?
- c) Did you belong to the police?
- d) Did you aid the Germans?
- e) Give the names of three persons who did.

All persons falling under Category (e) were, without any checking whatsoever, rounded up and shot. Then, the women were sent to Russia, while the men were mobilized and sent immediately to the front. According to this report, Vilna was almost an empty town in about a week's time.

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BAR-6186

RUSSIAN SENTIMENT IN ESTONIASECRETARY GENERAL'S MEMORANDUM, DATED AUGUST 1944

.....The feelings of the Estonian people at present may be summarized in the ancient Russian exclamation: "morit' to slobodni!" This is a conscious appreciation of the situation facing the Estonian people today. The Soviet armies have reached the Estonian frontier and threaten to re-occupy the country. The Estonian people are aware that the military occupation will be followed by arrests, executions, and deportations on a scale exceeding the horrors of 1941. The Soviet Union covets the Baltic States and Finland in order to establish her own "Moscovia maris Baltici." She claims to have incorporated the Baltic States in 1940, and nurtured puppet governments for Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania on Russian soil. The Finns fear a similar fate if the Russians succeed in establishing their control over Finland. The reality of this danger is clearly illustrated by the ominous developments in Russo-Polish relations. Reports have reached Estonia from Soviet occupied Lithuania, Poland, and White Russia of large scale deportations of the intelligentsia and even of more prosperous farmers, who, according to the Soviet view, had been exposed too long to the influence of the bourgeois world. Broadcasts from Leningrad are constantly threatening the so-called Estonian Nazis with dire punishment when the Red Army reaches Estonia. An appeal was made to the partisans to prevent those "Nazi plutocrats" from leaving Estonia. They must be liquidated in order to prevent them from carrying on the fight against the Soviets from abroad. The Estonians have no doubt that the people branded by the Soviets as "Estonian Nazi Plutocrats" are primarily those patriotic Estonians who firmly stand and fight for the independence of their country, and of whom hundreds have been placed under arrest by the Germans for their pro-British sympathies. And since the aim of the overwhelming majority of the Estonian people is the restoration of Estonia's independence, mass reprisals on an unprecedented scale are expected. Such appeals from abroad would seem to serve the purpose of providing the Soviets with an alibi since any atrocities committed after the entry of the Red Army into Estonia could later on be blamed on the partisans. An impartial investigation of the facts under war conditions would obviously be very difficult. There is little hope for help from outside for the Estonians know that the Western Democracies are at present in no position to help, no help can be expected from Sweden, and the Finns have too many troubles of their own.

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MEMORANDUM

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EAB-4386

the anti-German resistance movement in Estonia. During the mass arrests in April and on May 1st a number of them were arrested but others are carrying on despite German efforts to capture them. These men are obviously no "Quislings," and yet the Soviets brand them as traitors and their lackeys. While the Soviet forces are on the point of invading Estonian territory, the National Committee has issued an appeal to the people not to leave the country. As a result of this appeal the flow of refugees to Sweden and Finland has diminished. Some younger Estonians who had fled the country in order to avoid German mobilization are now eager to return from Sweden and to join themselves at the disposal of the National Committee for the defense of their country. The German attempts to mobilize the Estonians proved a failure because they endeavored to draft them into their own army and to make them fight for their own ends outside the territory of the Republic of Estonia. Now, however, they rally in response to an appeal by their own acknowledged representatives. The Estonian National Committee, whose aims are the restoration of National independence and the protection of Estonian lives and property. It may seem surprising that the Germans instead of supporting this popular movement are actually opposing the formation of an Estonian national army. It would appear that knowing the anti-German feelings of the Estonian people, the Germans fear that such an army under the political leadership of true patriots would not fight against the Russians alone, but would sooner or later turn against the Germans themselves. In their present difficulties, however, they have not been able to prevent the formation of Estonian national military units. At the same time they have sought to minimize the danger to themselves by resorting to political arrests. Hence the arrests of April and May 1st which affected primarily the Estonian intelligentsia. Public reaction to this step, however, was so audacious that a considerable number of those arrested had to be released again.

The main tragedy of the Estonian people is that they have to defend themselves against two enemies in opposite camps. Though, owing to the imminent danger which threatens the National existence and the very lives of the Estonians, the National Committee, supported in this by the whole population, is organizing at present the defense of the country against a new Soviet invasion, the Committee has to work underground and its members are in constant danger of being arrested by the Germans. If the resistance movement against the Germans is at present less active, it is due to the fact that a mass uprising would inevitably lay the country open to a Soviet Russian invasion. And the fear of Soviet Russia is even greater than the hatred for the Germans. Nevertheless, no one in Estonia doubts that in case the independence of the Republic of Estonia were guaranteed by the Allies such a popular uprising against the Germans would take place, which would vitally affect their North-Eastern front. Such a guarantee, however, has not been given. The Atlantic Charter was received with enthusiasm by the Estonian people at the time of its proclamation. Recent pronouncements of responsible Allied statesmen, however, have cast doubts on its effectiveness and general application. And yet, there is a deep conviction among the Estonian people that if they manage to survive the present struggle the principles of the Atlantic Charter will prevail in the end.....

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7-2215
11 August 1944

The following excerpts concerning the attitude of the Latvian people toward the Russians and the Germans have been taken from a Danish report:

1. On 30 July the Germans were assumed to have 35-40 divisions in the Baltic States. They provide no resistance worth mentioning to the Russians. The Germans are not short of men, but there is a certain shortage of material in the Baltic Area. The essential reason is however that their combat morale is undermined. The German soldier is unable to arrange any defense, largely because of internal dissension. No one wants to be left behind and become a sort of "Stalingrad Group". It is thought that a large part of the low morale is attributable to Latvian propaganda. In the days just after the German occupation, a small number of Latvians were taken into the German Army. They were put in among the German soldiers. During the first year many Latvians were forced into the army, and now the situation is in some cases reversed. There are German companies with about 10-15 Latvians to one German. Because of the hatred aroused by the Germans in Latvia, the Latvians do everything they can to sabotage the Germans. There is no doubt many of them are pure partisans. They steal weapons and sell them to the population.

2. As for feeling in Latvia, there is no doubt that 90% of the people in the country favor the Russians. This is attributed to the absence in Latvia of a farming class owning its land. The country population sees no difference between working for a private owner and working for a "kolhoz" association. The Germans have returned no ground to the former owners, but rather continued the Russian system, increasing the quotas to be turned over to them. In some cases these quotas go up to 50%. In the cities, especially in Riga, feeling toward the Russians is much less favorable, chiefly because most of the "intelligentsia" is concentrated there. These people have no sympathy for the Germans either. They have begun an independence movement which, however, comes a bit late to have any great effect on the people. In July, probably the 15th, an order came forbidding people to leave Latvia or send property to Germany. This affects Germans both from Germany and Latvia. It was due to preparations being made by civil servants and returned Baltic Germans for abandoning the country in haste.

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9-4226
13 August '44

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1. There are several signs pointing to continued German resistance in the Estonian sector. Thus, Inspector General Noodela - leader of the SO in Estonia - was in Berlin recently seeking more arms, and it is reported that the Germans promised to comply with his request. Of the German troops evacuated from Finland since the beginning of the offensive on the Baltic front, one-half were sent from Hango to Estonia, while the others were sent to Denmark. Two divisions of Germans have been brought in as reinforcements since the beginning of the big offensive on the Estonian front. The Nazis also recalled all officials of the "Estonian German Civil Administration" from Kaunasburg and East Prussia. These officials have now been sent to Estonia to organize the defense of that country. Similarly, Heinrich Lohse, Reichskommissar for northern "Ostland", has moved with his staff from Riga to Pärnu, in Estonia. Recently, Dr. Hjalmar Meis, leading Estonian Gauleiter and head of the so-called "Estonian Self-administration", proclaimed total mobilization in Estonia. Men, including eighteen-year-old boys, have been armed and are being sent to the front. It is alleged (no confirmation) that after the mobilization was proclaimed, the "Estonian Self-government" was dissolved by the Germans. The "German Civil Administration", however, continues to function under Councilor General Karl Litman.

2. Two Estonians recently escaped from the Soviet-captured city of Vilna. They report that the Russian troops assured the frightened population that they would remain in Lithuania. Two days later, however, the NKVD (Political Police) forces arrived and the people were asked to fill in the following questionnaire:
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 - b) What have you done to sabotage the German war effort?
 - c) Did you belong to the police?
 - d) Did you aid the Germans?
 - e) Give the names of three persons who did.

All persons falling under Category (e) were, without any checking whatsoever, rounded up and shot. Then, the women were sent to Russia, while the men were mobilized and sent immediately to the front. According to this report, Vilna was almost an empty town in about a week's time.

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